IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with <u>underlining</u> and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please ADD new claims 29 and 30, and CANCEL claims 1-16 in accordance with the following:

1-16. (CANCELLED)

17. (ORIGINAL) A color image processing apparatus comprising:

object color designating means for designating an object color to be converted in an input color image;

optimum color setting means for setting an optimum color corresponding to said object color designated by said object color designating means;

preliminary lightness conversion amount obtaining means for obtaining a preliminary lightness conversion amount in accordance with a differential value in lightness between said object color and said optimum color;

practical lightness conversion amount obtaining means for obtaining a practical lightness conversion amount by compensating said preliminary lightness conversion amount so as to decrease said preliminary lightness conversion amount commensurate with the largeness of said preliminary lightness conversion amount;

lightness conversion factor obtaining means for obtaining a lightness conversion factor based on said practical lightness conversion amount, said object color and said optimum color; and

lightness converting means for converting the input color image in lightness using said lightness conversion factor to create a lightness-changed color image.

18. (ORIGINAL) A color image processing apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said practical lightness conversion amount obtaining means obtains said lightness conversion amount such as to approximate a predetermined value as said preliminary lightness conversion amount increases.

19. (ORIGINAL) A color image processing apparatus according to claim 17, further comprising preliminary lightness converting means for preliminarily converting the input color image in lightness, based on a histogram or a maximum/minimum/average value of pixel information in the input color image, to create a preliminary amended-lightness color image as the color image.

20. (ORIGINAL) A color image processing apparatus according to claim 18, further comprising preliminary lightness converting means for preliminarily converting the input color image in lightness, based on a histogram or a maximum/minimum/average value of pixel information in the input color image, to create a preliminary amended-lightness color image as the color image.

21. (ORIGINAL) A computer-readable recording medium in which a color image processing program is recorded, wherein said color image processing program instructs a computer to function as the following:

object color designating means for designating an object color to be converted in an input color image;

optimum color setting means for setting an optimum color corresponding to said object color designated by said object color designating means;

preliminary lightness conversion amount obtaining means for obtaining a preliminary lightness conversion amount in accordance with a differential value in lightness between said object color and said optimum color;

practical lightness conversion amount obtaining means for obtaining a practical lightness conversion amount by compensating said preliminary lightness conversion amount so as to decrease said preliminary lightness conversion amount commensurate with the largeness of said preliminary lightness conversion amount;

lightness conversion factor obtaining means for obtaining a lightness conversion factor based on said practical lightness conversion amount, said object color and said optimum color; and

lightness converting means for converting the input color image in lightness using said lightness conversion factor to create a lightness-changed color image.

22. (ORIGINAL) A computer-readable recording medium according to claim 21, wherein

said practical lightness conversion amount obtaining means obtains said lightness conversion amount such as to approximate a predetermined value as said preliminary lightness conversion amount increases.

23. (ORIGINAL) A computer-readable recording medium according to claim 21, wherein said color processing program further instructs the computer to function as preliminary lightness converting means for preliminarily converting the input color image in lightness, based on a histogram or a maximum/minimum/average value of pixel information in the input color image, to create a preliminary amended-lightness color image as the color image.

24. (ORIGINAL) A computer-readable recording medium according to claim 22, wherein said color processing program further instructs the computer to function as preliminary lightness converting means for preliminarily converting the input color image in lightness, based on a histogram or a maximum/minimum/average value of pixel information in the input color image, to create a preliminary amended-lightness color image as the color image.

25. (ORIGINAL) A color image processing method comprising the steps of:
(a) designating an object color to be converted in an input color image;
(b) setting an optimum color corresponding to said object color designated by said designating step (a);
(c) obtaining a preliminary lightness conversion amount in accordance with a differential value in lightness between said object color and said optimum color;
(d) obtaining a practical lightness conversion amount by compensating said preliminary lightness conversion amount so as to decrease said preliminary lightness conversion amount commensurate with the largeness of said preliminary lightness conversion amount;
(e) obtaining a lightness conversion factor based on said practical lightness conversion amount said object color and said optimum color; and
(f) converting the input color image in lightness using said lightness conversion factor to create a lightness-changed color image.

26. (ORIGINAL) A color image processing method according to claim 25, wherein in said practical lightness conversion amount obtaining step (d), said lightness conversion amount such as to approximate a predetermined value is obtained as said preliminary lightness

conversion amount increases.

27. (ORIGINAL) A color image processing method according to claim 25, further comprising a step of preliminarily converting the input color image in lightness, based on a histogram or a maximum/minimum/average value of pixel information in the input color image, to create a preliminary amended-lightness color image as the color image.

28. (ORIGINAL) A color image processing method according to claim 26, further comprising a step of preliminarily converting the input color image in lightness, based on a histogram or a maximum/minimum/average value of pixel information in the input color image, to create a preliminary amended-lightness color image as the color image.

29. (NEW) A method comprising:

designating an object color of an input color image and assigning a stored optimum color corresponding to the object color; and

converting the input color image in accordance with a differential value of lightness obtained between the designated object color and the assigned optimum color, wherein the differential value is adjustably maintained within a predetermined maximum conversion value.

30. (NEW) An apparatus comprising:

means for designating an object color of an input color image and assigning a stored optimum color corresponding to the object color; and

means for converting the input color image in accordance with a differential value of lightness obtained between the designated object color and the assigned optimum color, wherein the differential value is adjustably maintained within a predetermined maximum conversion value.